



Fighting Public Corruption

Veteran N.J. Legislator Was Guilty of Misusing Campaign Funds; Other Probes Meant Jail Time for Hainesport Mayor, Motor Vehicle Commission Workers

On November 19, 2004, Assemblyman Anthony R. Improveduto pleaded guilty in New Jersey Superior Court to state criminal charges related to his misuse of campaign funds for personal expenses. The case was a milestone for the Attorney General's Office.

In successfully pursuing a criminal accusation that would ultimately force Improveduto from office, place the veteran lawmaker on probation for five years and require that he repay \$50,000 in illegally spent campaign funds, Attorney General Harvey made New Jersey history. No other Attorney General had ever successfully prosecuted a sitting member of the Legislature.

For taxpayers and public officials alike, the message was clear: the Attorney General's Office places a high priority on ensuring integrity at all levels of public service.

On April 8, 2004, former Hainesport, Burlington County, Mayor Ronald Corn was sentenced to five years in prison for setting up an unauthorized "Mayor's Fund" into which taxpayer dollars were channeled for personal use. As part of the same investigation by the Division of Criminal Justice within the Attorney General's Office, Hainesport's former municipal finance officer, Kristine Wisniewski, was sentenced to three years in prison. State investigation found that approximately \$339,000 in funds from municipal accounts was diverted to the secret "Mayor's Fund" and subsequently used by Wisniewski and Corn for personal expenses. Both defendants were ultimately granted early release from prison upon being accepted into the state's Intensive Supervision Program for certain eligible offenders, but their public reputations were tarnished, they were barred from future public employment, and they incurred fines and stiff restitution requirements imposed by the court (\$180,000 restitution for Wisniewski, nearly \$61,000 for Corn).

Highlights of other significant public corruption cases from 2003-2004 included:

❖ Commerce Commission Indictment —

As part of an ongoing investigation into the New Jersey Commerce and Economic Growth Commission, the Division of Criminal Justice's Special Prosecutions Bureau obtained a 16-count indictment in 2004 charging the Commission's former chief of staff and two family members hired as "consultants" with official misconduct, theft and tampering with public records to cover up their alleged illegal acts. The indictment charged that thousands of dollars in public money was paid to the family members of the Chief of Staff for "consulting" work that was either duplicative, or was never done at all.

❖ DRBA Official Guilty on Felony Charges —

The Attorney General's Office played a key role in developing the evidence that led to the 2004 conviction of Michael E. Harkins, former Executive Director of the bi-state Delaware River and Bay Authority, on

Official charged in theft of funds

Allegedly paid mom, sister for no work

By JEFF PILLETTS
TRENTON BUREAU

A top official of the state Commerce Commission gave no-bid, no-work "consulting" contracts to her mother and sister and fabricated memos to cover up the scheme, according to an indictment announced Monday by the Attorney General's Office.

Lesly Devereaux was charged with 16 counts of official misconduct, conspiracy and theft.

Painting firm admits fraud

Contractor lied to schools about wages

By KIBRET MARKOS
and BRIAN KLADKO
STAFF WRITERS

The co-owners of a painting company admitted in court Thursday that they netted \$1.5 million by deceiving three school districts, including Ridgewood and Paterson.

Jose LaGreco, 53, and Charles Paraboschi, 65, told a Superior Court judge in Hack-



Plea deal is set in school

By DEANGLASS CROUSE
STAFF WRITER

MIDDESTOWN — Two private school administrators admitted Monday that they created no-show jobs for relatives

Windsor co-founders facing 7

state Superior Court, both men will lose their education licenses and must relinquish all financial interests in the four co-qualifying Windsor Schools in Paterson and during sentencing June 16. Each also will be held accountable, based on their salaries, if the co-founders and the school corporations fail to repay the stolen funds.

Newark cops indicted

Pair netted in state corruption probe

By BARRY CARTER
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Two Newark cops were indicted yesterday on charges who knew the city's police

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felony charges relating to corrupt conduct in office. Harkins used a plane piloted by a DRBA employee to attend sporting events and non-business-related social functions, and used DRBA funds to pay for private meals, hotel rooms and limousine costs.

❖ Motor Vehicle Commission Document Fraud Cases —

The Division of Criminal Justice successfully prosecuted more than 100 defendants — including 16 former New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission employees — who were involved either in the theft of MVC customer payments while they were employees, or in selling and otherwise providing MVC documents to persons who did not meet the State's legal identification requirements. Sentences imposed by the courts ranged from 364 days in a county jail to 10 years in State Prison and, in some cases, hundreds of hours of community service. Convicted MVC employees were barred from holding future government employment.

Public Corruption Case Statistics

